First day points of interest regarding the 4 Controversial Conservation Topic modules

8.30.16

Status of global fisheries

* Some fishery stocks are overfished, but management can work
* Global conclusions on fishery status may be overgeneralizations—there’s lots of variation in fishery status case by case
* Jurisdiction over fishery resources may impact sustainability—stocks in the high seas outside of countries’ managed zones may have different dynamics than those under single-country control
* What is the role in commercial fishing gear types in global fisheries sustainability? Some gears are more destructive/less impactful than others.
* What is the role of bycatch in global fisheries sustainability?
* There appears to be strong polarization between marine ecologists and fisheries scientists regarding the sustainability of present fishing practices and fishing management.

Ecosystem reference baselines

* There may be a disconnect between baselines chosen to satisfy societal values vs. those feasible from ecosystem structure and function—ecological realities vs. societal values in defining ecosystem reference baselines.
* Is there a choice of reference baseline that is purely objective and driven by a value judgment?
* What is an appropriate level to assess ecosystem baselines—species level, guild level, systems level?
* How do researchers and conservationists navigate alignment with stakeholder groups under conflicting stakeholder group values and objectives?
* How much information about ecosystem baselines and assessment of state of ecosystems relative to a given baseline is necessary before management/restoration action can be taken?
* Some ecosystems may be permanently degraded—is an ‘irretrievable’ ecosystem status being considered in defining target ecosystem baselines?
* Economics, such as return on investment, often drive societal values. What role do economic values play in defining target ecosystem reference baselines?

Monetization of nature

* What is the social and ecological impact of failed monetization schemes, such as the falter and/or collapse of carbon markets?
* What is the interplay between monetizing nature or ecosystem services and the burgeoning field of conservation financing, including social impact investing?
* What is the role of trans-nation agreements in monetization schemes?
* Are there unintended losers from monetization schemes, if for example ecosystem components of low-value given a monetization framework are lost, but which have high value in other valuation frameworks such intrinsic value?

Conservation triage

* Do umbrella/flagship species have merit as high priority targets under conservation triage? Or should we move beyond single species and focus on ecosystem function encompassed by umbrella/flagship species directly?
* Existing policies/regulations/legislation may prevent rational conservation triage; are existing policies/regulations/legislation being considered during conservation triage exercises?
* Diversity or other ecosystem hotspots may be conservation targets of high priority given limited conservation resources; what is the role of geopolitical constraints such as requirements for cross-nation cooperation or lack of stable governance in preventing effective conservation triage decisions?
* How does choice of prioritization framework affect conservation triage decisions?
* A conservation triage paradox: anthropogenic drivers affect all components of an ecosystem, yet society only has limited resources to act against a subset of drivers—we are the problem and can only afford part of the solution. What role might prevention of the (human) causes of conservation problems play in avoiding conservation triage situations?

General to all topics:

* How do scientists navigate the tightrope between establishing a position on a subject versus advocacy, or informing stakeholders about an issue versus advocacy?
* Food production is quickly becoming an inherent and high priority society value globally—how is food production incorporated in the Conservation Issues discussed in this seminar?